

## **Investigation of Psychological Adaptation, Pedagogical Competence, and Adjustment to University Life Levels of Repatriate University Students**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the present research is to examine the adaptation levels of repatriate university students to university life in terms of the predictive roles of pedagogical competence and psychological adjustment variables. The research was conducted via relational screening model, which is a quantitative research method. The population of the research consisted of repatriate university students studying at different faculties in Aktau in 2024. No sampling was done and an attempt was made to reach the entire population, 225 students were included in the research. The Adaptation to University Life Scale, Psychological Adjustment Scale Short Form and University Students Pedagogical Competence Scale were used as data collection tools. The data were collected between the months May and June 2024. The analysis of the data was carried out using the SPSS 26.0 program, and Pearson Correlation Analysis, Independent Groups t Test, ANOVA and Regression Analysis. According to the results; psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence play an important role in the adaptation of repatriate university students to university life. It was observed that repatriate female students had higher levels of adaptation to university life and pedagogical competence compared to males. No difference was observed in psychological adaptation. Senior students' adaptation to university life, psychological adaptation and pedagogical adaptation were significantly higher than first-year ones. It was observed that 11.8% of the total variance regarding adaptation to university life was explained by psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence.

**Keywords:** *Adjustment to university life, repatriate university students, psychological adaptation, pedagogical competence*

### **Introduction**

The increasing international mobility due to globalization has made it much more common for individuals to have experience in different cultural and academic environments. This situation has made the re-adaptation process that individuals who have lived and studied abroad face when they

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go back to their home countries an important research topic. These individuals, who have to adapt their experiences shaped by different educational systems and cultural norms abroad to their own cultural and academic contexts, are defined as "repatriant students" in the literature (Andrade, 2006). The re-adaptation process of repatriant students includes complex factors such as cultural conflict, psychological adaptation, and pedagogical competence, and shapes both the academic and social integration processes of these individuals (Braxton et al., 2013). This process creates various effects not only at the individual level but also in the social context, and therefore stands out as a critical area to be examined.

Berry's (1997) theory of cultural adaptation addresses the psychological and sociocultural difficulties that individuals experience during the adaptation process to a new society. Despite the advantages of multicultural life experiences, repatriate students face difficulties such as cultural shock, language barriers, and different educational systems (Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Sultan et al., 2024). The effects of these difficulties on individuals' academic success, psychological health, and social integration processes stand out as an important area of research in the literature (Crockett et al., 2007). This study aimed to examine the predictive roles of pedagogical competence and psychological adaptation variables in the adaptation levels of repatriate university students to university life and to reveal the interactions of these three factors and to understand the effects of these processes on the individual and social levels. While psychological adaptation refers to the capacity of individuals to emotionally adapt to new environmental conditions they encounter, pedagogical competence covers the ability of individuals to meet the expectations of the academic system. University adaptation involves the process of integrating these individuals into their new environment as a whole in academic, social and cultural dimensions. Evaluating these factors together will provide a broader perspective in understanding the intercultural adaptation skills of individuals.

### **Definition of Repatriate Students and Their Integration into the University**

Immigrant students are students who spend part of their lives in another country and return to their country for educational purposes or other reasons. These students usually have a bicultural identity and carry the influences of both the cultures they belong to and the cultures they have lived in for a while (Berry, 1997). Although it is stated that immigrant students have advantages in terms of

cultural diversity and multifaceted experiences, this situation also brings with it various difficulties. Language barriers, cultural differences and uncertainties in the reintegration process are among the main problems experienced by these students (Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Immigrant students may also differ in terms of their access to social support mechanisms. For instance, while some students have a strong social network in the country they return to, for others this process can be quite isolating (Bokayev, 2023; 2024; Chen, 1999). The adaptation process of these students to university directly affects their psychological health and social integration as well as their academic success. It is known that sociocultural factors in particular play a decisive role in the adaptation processes of these individuals (Mori, 2000; Taggart, 2024).

The integration of immigrant students into universities is a multidimensional process; it is affected by different factors in terms of individuals, academics and social aspects. This process affects not only the academic performance of students but also their social relations and psychological well-being (Zhou et al., 2008). First of all, immigrant students usually have to adapt to an educational system that they are not used to before. Different teaching methods, assessment criteria and learning expectations can pose a significant adaptation problem for these students (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). However, language proficiency is an important part of the integration process. Inadequate language skills negatively affect both students' academic success and social relations (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Therefore, language support programs and initiatives aimed at increasing cultural awareness play a critical role in the integration processes of immigrant students into universities. The existence of social support mechanisms strengthens students' sense of belonging and facilitates their adaptation processes (Shergill, 1997).

To make the integration process of immigrant students more effective, universities need to develop inclusive policies. Activities that increase cultural awareness, counseling services, and mentor programs can strengthen students' social ties and increase their academic success. Such initiatives create positive effects not only on students' academic lives but also on their general life experiences (Townsend & Poh, 2008).

## **Psychological Adaptation**

Psychological adaptation refers to the totality of emotional and cognitive processes experienced by an individual while adapting to a new environment. This process is related to the individual

feeling that s/he belongs to a new society or environment and establishing a positive psychological balance in this context (Berry, 1997). The successful realization of psychological adaptation depends on the individual's ability to maintain emotional well-being and cope with stress factors. For immigrant students, this situation includes dynamics such as getting used to a new culture, meeting academic demands, and being effective in social relationships (Trice, 2003).

Psychological adaptation is closely related to concepts such as cultural shock and acculturation. Cultural shock is a stressful period resulting from the difficulties an individual encounters in a foreign culture. This process can turn from the individual's initial enthusiasm to disappointment and feelings of incompatibility over time (Zhou et al., 2008). Acculturation, on the other hand, refers to the individual's balance between preserving and adapting to their own cultural values while adapting to a new culture (Berry, 1997). These two concepts are important for understanding the psychological adaptation processes of immigrant students. The psychological adaptation processes of immigrant students are shaped by individual differences and environmental factors. Loneliness, social isolation, and lack of belonging are among the main difficulties individuals encounter during this process. Immigrant students may feel excluded or lonely because they often lack social support networks. This situation can negatively affect individuals' psychological health and reduce their academic success (Nuganova et al., 2024; Perron et al., 2022; Wei et al., 2007).

In the psychological adaptation process, individuals' access to social support mechanisms plays a critical role. For example, Crockett et al. (2007) revealed in their research that students with strong social ties experience less stress and are psychologically healthier. Social support makes it easier for individuals to cope with stress while also increasing their sense of belonging. In addition, individuals' personal characteristics such as flexibility, self-confidence, and problem-solving skills are also decisive in the successful completion of this process. In this process, counseling services and cultural awareness programs that universities can provide are also essential. Initiatives such as cultural sensitivity training and student mentoring in particular can facilitate the adaptation processes of immigrant students. Besides, additional support such as language courses and psychological counseling can be provided so that individuals can adapt to their new environment. Such initiatives will not only increase students' psychological health but also their overall quality of life (Tajibayeva et al., 2023).

Factors affecting psychological adaptation can be addressed at individual, environmental, and cultural levels. Individual factors include personality traits, past experiences, and stress coping skills. For example, individuals with high self-confidence can adapt to a new environment more quickly (Ertürk, 2022; Knocke & Schuster, 2017). Environmental factors include social support networks, university environment, and counseling services. Social support, in particular, makes students feel more secure and facilitates adaptation processes (Tajibayeva et al., 2020). Cultural factors refer to the compatibility between the culture an individual comes from and the cultural values of the new environment. Cultural distance can make it difficult for an individual to adapt. However, cultural awareness programs and policies that encourage cultural diversity can be effective in reducing these difficulties (Zhou et al., 2008). In this context, universities should develop comprehensive support mechanisms for the needs of immigrant students.

### **Pedagogical Competence**

Pedagogical competence is a concept that includes knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to provide students with an effective learning process (Kahramanoğlu & Ay, 2013). In the context of repatriate university students, pedagogical competence covers the processes of students adapting the knowledge and experience they have gained from a different educational culture abroad to the academic environment in their own country. This competence is a multidimensional competence that affects not only the effectiveness of learning strategies but also the adaptation to the expectations of a new educational system (James & Azungah, 2020).

When repatriate students study in a cultural and pedagogical context that is different from their previous educational experiences, they may have difficulty adapting to the dynamics of the current academic environment. This adaptation process depends on the pedagogical competence levels of individuals (Andrade, 2006). In particular, elements of the previous educational system such as different teaching methods, assessment criteria and learning environments can directly shape students' learning behaviors in the new context. At this point, pedagogical competence is seen as a fundamental tool that optimizes students' skills in accessing and interpreting information. It also includes students' capacity to respond to academic expectations (Mori, 2000). For example, if a repatriate student has previously been educated with a participatory learning model, s/he may find himself or herself in a passive learner role in a system based on a teacher-centered approach. Such differences may have a decisive effect on the student's participation in classes, the process of

completing assignments and academic success motivation. Therefore, pedagogical competence reflects not only an individual skill set but also the process of interaction the student establishes with the context in which s/he is located (Orakova et al., 2024; Townsend & Poh, 2008).

For students from different cultural contexts, pedagogical competence plays a critical role in intercultural transition processes. In this context, the ability to adapt to teaching-learning processes is based on the student's perceptions of the educational culture and the strategies s/he develops in line with these perceptions (Schroedler et al., 2024; Trice, 2003). The student's level of pedagogical competence determines his/her capacity to understand course content, use teaching materials effectively, and successfully complete academic tasks. It is also related to learning styles and strategies (Wei et al., 2007). Since repatriate students are accustomed to different learning models, they may feel the need to restructure their individual learning styles in the new educational environment. A student who is faced with a learning system based on group work instead of individual work may have to develop his/her pedagogical competence to adapt to this system (Tajibayeva et al., 2023). In this context, pedagogical competence reflects not only the individual's capacity to adapt to the current context, but also his/her flexibility in learning processes. Pedagogical competence is not only limited to learning strategies but also includes critical thinking, problem solving, and information access skills (Knocke & Schuster, 2017). Repatriate students may have adopted different ways of thinking and problem solving approaches during their education abroad. Their ability to use these skills effectively in their new academic environment depends on their level of pedagogical competence (Tajibayeva et al., 2020).

The pedagogical competence of repatriate students has a direct impact on their academic performance. Students with adequate pedagogical skills are more successful in achieving their academic goals, while students with low competence levels may encounter various difficulties in their learning process. This situation is closely related to students' self-efficacy perceptions regarding the academic context as well as their individual learning capacities (García-Martínez et al., 2019; Townsend & Poh, 2008).

Supporting the pedagogical competence levels of educational institutions can play an important role in increasing the academic success of repatriate students. Universities can develop practices such as academic support programs, orientation studies, and learning workshops to improve the

pedagogical competence of these students (Nyinge et al., 2024; Tajibayeva et al., 2023). Such support mechanisms can facilitate students' adaptation to the dynamics of the current academic context. Pedagogical competence should be considered not only as an individual skill, but also as an indicator of students' adaptation capacities in their educational processes. In this context, improving the pedagogical competence levels of repatriate students can enable universities to benefit from cultural diversity and create a more inclusive learning environment. This process has a strategic importance that will produce positive results at both individual and institutional levels (Tajibayeva et al., 2020).

### **Adapting to University Life**

Adaptation to university life is a concept that refers to individuals' adaptation to new experiences they encounter in academic, social, and personal areas. Berry's (1997) acculturation theory is a frequently used approach to explain how individuals adapt to a new environment. According to this theory, individuals' adaptation processes can occur through different strategies such as integration, assimilation, separation, or marginalization. Students who adopt the integration strategy actively adapt to the university culture while preserving their own cultural identities. This strategy positively affects both the academic and social success of students (Braxton et al., 2013; Hamakali & Josua, 2023; Okunishi & Tanaka, 2023). However, students who adopt the assimilation strategy may move away from their own cultural values and try to adapt only to the university environment. This situation can lead to students experiencing identity conflicts and increasing their psychological stress levels (Andrade, 2006; Soyer et al, 2024).

Tinto's (2012) student integration model emphasizes the importance of academic and social integration in the adaptation process to university life. According to this model, if students are supported in terms of both their academic success and social relationships, their commitment to the university and success rates increase. This model is especially important for immigrant students because these students may encounter difficulties while trying to adapt to a new cultural and academic context in the university environment. Astin's (2014) participation theory emphasizes that students' learning experiences are directly related to how much they participate in the university community. According to this theory, students who actively participate in social and academic activities adapt better and benefit more from the learning process. This participation may be more challenging for immigrant students due to language barriers or cultural differences.

However, when appropriate support mechanisms and incentives are provided, the participation levels of these students can be increased and the adaptation process can be facilitated (Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

Immigrant students face a series of obstacles during the adaptation process to university life. The reasons for these obstacles stem from both individual and environmental factors. The most important of these difficulties is cultural shock. A different education system, new social norms and language barriers make it difficult for students to adapt. For example, different assessment methods and teaching styles negatively affect students' academic success (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). Social isolation is a significant problem for immigrant students. Especially for students with low language proficiency or different cultural backgrounds, establishing social networks in a new environment is challenging. This situation can cause students to feel lonely and lose their sense of belonging. The lack of social ties negatively affects students' university experiences by reducing their academic motivation (Zhang & Goodson, 2011). Financial difficulties and lack of family support are other significant problems that students face. Immigrant students often have to balance both academic success and living expenses. This situation increases students' stress levels and complicates their adaptation process (Mori, 2000).

Various strategies can be implemented at individual and institutional levels to facilitate the adaptation process to university life. At the individual level, it is recommended that students participate in programs to improve their language skills, participate in social activities, and receive psychological support. Language proficiency is a critical factor in terms of both academic success and social relationships. Language courses and cultural awareness programs can help students feel more secure (Townsend & Poh, 2008). At the institutional level, it is of great importance for universities to develop inclusive policies. For example, orientation programs can support students in getting to know the university environment and providing access to resources. These programs should be designed to alleviate the cultural and linguistic difficulties that immigrant students face. In addition, mentoring programs can strengthen social ties by pairing new students with experienced ones. Mentoring is an effective strategy that allows students to adapt to the university environment more quickly (Ndiangui et al., 2024; Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Counseling services and psychological support mechanisms can help students cope with stress and achieve their academic goals. These services are an important support mechanism that facilitates the adaptation process, especially for immigrant students. Psychological counseling can reduce students' feelings of loneliness and increase their academic success (Knocke & Schuster, 2017). The integration of technological tools is another factor that will facilitate the adaptation process. Online platforms allow students to expand both their academic and social networks. For example, virtual communities or online course materials created by immigrant students among themselves support students' learning processes and make their university experiences more accessible. In addition, digital mentoring programs allow students to receive guidance and establish social connections (Crockett et al., 2007). Universities can organize social activities such as cultural events and student clubs to facilitate the adaptation process. Such events allow students to interact with each other and increase their sense of belonging. In addition, multicultural events create a more inclusive university environment by encouraging students to recognize and respect different cultures.

### **The Relationship Between Psychological Adaptation, Pedagogical Competence and University Adjustment**

Psychological adaptation, pedagogical competence, and adaptation to university life are important elements that shape the university experiences of immigrant students. This situation affects students' academic, social, and emotional success through both individual and environmental factors. The interaction of the three components is critical to increasing students' overall life satisfaction and the benefit they receive from education (Tajibayeva et al., 2020).

Psychological adaptation refers to the capacity of individuals to adapt to new environments by providing emotional balance (Berry, 1997). Immigrant students often face problems such as cultural shock, social isolation, academic pressures, and identity conflicts when they begin university (James & Azungah, 2020). Such stress factors can negatively affect the psychological health of the individual and make the process of adapting to university life difficult. Psychological adaptation in immigrant students is directly related to the presence of social support systems. Crockett et al. (2007) stated that individuals with strong social ties can more easily cope with emotional difficulties and have higher academic success. Social support reduces students' sense of loneliness, increases their self-confidence, and strengthens their sense of belonging. In this context,

universities can encourage psychological adaptation by increasing social support mechanisms. Students with strong psychological adaptation can more easily achieve academic success. These individuals can develop more effective strategies for coping with stress and focus on their goals by maintaining their motivation (Zharkynbekova et al., 2024). Academic counseling services and psychological guidance, in particular, contribute to the successful completion of this process. Students' determination of their own goals and making plans towards these goals is an indication of their psychological adaptation.

For immigrant students, adaptation to university is not limited to achieving academic success; it also includes the processes of establishing social relationships, redefining one's identity, and understanding cultural diversity. In a learning environment where pedagogical competence is high, students are more likely to successfully complete these processes. Multicultural classroom discussions and group projects allow students to understand different perspectives and develop cultural empathy (Braxton et al., 2013). Effectively combining psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence enriches students' university experiences. With the support of educators, students can make progress not only in academic areas but also in social and personal development. In the long term, this is reflected in students' success in business life and their capacity to contribute to society (Hadizadeh & Youbi, 2024; Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

When the literature on the adaptation problems faced by repatriate students is examined, it is seen that studies on the problems in this area are mostly conducted regarding cultural difficulties (Andrade, 2006; Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000). Zhang and Goodson (2011) examined the factors affecting the psychosocial adaptation of international students in a study conducted in America. Zhou and his colleagues (2008) examined the basic adaptation models in the literature in a cultural context. Smith and Khawaja (2011) examined the applicability of adaptation models to international students. This study aims to fill an important gap in the literature by examining the psychological, academic and social experiences of repatriate students. A detailed examination of the interactions between psychological adaptation, pedagogical competence and university adaptation can clarify the basic dynamics affecting students' academic and social success. In particular, examining the effects of psychological adaptation on pedagogical competence and academic performance will provide a new perspective in understanding student experiences. The practical contributions of the research are that it will contribute to universities developing more

effective support mechanisms for repatriate students. In addition, information obtained from the experiences of repatriate students can guide the formation of more inclusive national and international education policies. Policies that support the integration of these individuals into society will provide both individual and societal benefits in the long term.

This study aims to examine the adaptation levels of repatriate university students to university life in terms of the predictive role of pedagogical competence and psychological adaptation variables. To this end, the following research questions were sought in the study:

- What is the level of pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation and adaptation to university life of repatriate university students?
- Is there a significant difference between pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation and adaptation to university life regarding gender of repatriate university students?
- Do pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation and adaptation to university life of repatriate university students differ according to study year (freshmen/ sophomores/ juniors/ seniors)?
- Is there a relationship between pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation and adaptation to university life of repatriate university students?
- Do pedagogical competence and psychological adaptation of participating university students significantly predict adaptation to university life?

## **Method**

### **Research Design**

The study group, data collection tools, data collection process and data analysis are given in this part. The present research, which aims to examine whether pedagogical competence and psychological adjustment can predict the level of adaptation to university life of repatriate students, is a descriptive research based on the relational survey model. The descriptive method aims to reveal the relationships between situations. The relational survey method, which is one of the types of the descriptive method, is a research method used to determine whether there is a relationship between variables. However, when the aim of the research is to determine how much of the degree

of change in a variable is caused by the other variable, the relational survey model is used (Cohen et al., 2000).

### **Study Group**

The study was conducted with individuals who came to Kazakhstan from different countries for university education and who continue their formal education. The population of the study consisted of repatriate university students studying at different faculties of universities in Aktau in 2024. The individuals participating in the study were selected from students who have been living in Kazakhstan for two years or more and actively continue their education at universities. The students' ability to speak Kazakh is also one of the conditions of participation in the study in order to fill in the scales in a right way. The purpose of the present study to reach the entire population with the convenience sampling technique without using any sample selection method. However, a total of 225 students were reached due to reasons such as not accepting to participate in the study, not coming to school on the dates the study was conducted. From the total number, 119 of the students were female and 106 were male. 46 of the repatriate students were in their first year, 50 in the second year, 62 in the third year, and 67 in the fourth year. The average age of repatriate university students in the research sample was 22.4.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In this study 'University Life Adjustment Scale (ULAS)', 'Psychological Adjustment Scale Short Form' ve 'Pedagogical Competence Scale for University Students' scales were used to collect data. It took approximately 14 minutes to complete the scales. Incompletely filled scales were removed from the research set.

#### **University Life Adjustment Scale (ULAS)**

In determining the participants' adaptation levels to the university, the "Adjustment to University Life Scale" developed by Aslan (2015) and adapted to Kazakh by the researchers was used. The scale, evaluated with the five-point Likert technique, consists of 60 items including "Personal Adaptation" dimension (20 items), "Social Adaptation" dimension (20 items) and "Academic Adaptation" dimension (20 items). In the analysis conducted with the data collected within the scope of the research in the adaptation study, the variance coefficients explained .77 for personal adaptation and 24.69% of the variance belonging to ULAS, respectively. For the social adaptation

dimension, it varied between .33 and .71 and explained 20.48% of the variance belonging to ULAS. For the academic adaptation dimension, it varied between .40 and .73 and explained 22.99% of the variance belonging to ULAS. It was observed that 78.16% of the variance of the Adaptation to University Life Scale was explained. In the adaptation study of the scale, the internal consistency coefficients were calculated as .92 for the personal adjustment dimension, .89 for the social adjustment dimension and .93 for the academic adjustment dimension. In the current study, the internal consistency coefficient of the total scale was found to be .93. This value shows that the scale used in the study is reliable.

### **Psychological Adjustment Scale Short Form**

The scale developed by Cruz et al. (2019) to measure the psychological adjustment of university students was adapted to Kazakh by the researchers. The scale, which has a one-dimensional structure and consists of six items, is generally a self-report tool for psychological adjustment. The items are rated with a 5-point scoring key (ranging from 1 = Not at all to 5 = Extremely). Each item evaluates how the participant felt last week. The high average of the total scores obtained is considered as the high level of psychological adjustment. Exploratory Factor Analyses conducted on the Kazakh form of the scale revealed a one-dimensional structure. The explanatory level of this single dimension as a variance was 49.8%. The Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient conducted on the scale items was calculated as 0.90.

### **Pedagogical Competence Scale for University Students**

Repatriate is a 5-point Likert-type scale developed by researchers to measure the pedagogical competencies of university students. In the scale development process, first of all, a comprehensive literature review was conducted and an item pool was created by examining the articles accessible in academic databases and especially the pedagogical competencies developed by the Kazakhstan Higher Education Institution. Then, exploratory factor analyses were conducted to determine the validity and reliability of the scale. The draft scale pool, which included 25 items, was asked to mark whether the items measured pedagogical competence by taking into account the definition of pedagogical competence, by making a 5-point rating as “fully measures, measures, partially, does not measure, definitely does not measure”. The draft scale was applied to 225 students studying in different departments of universities in Kazakhstan for the pilot application. As a result

of the factor analysis, a draft scale of 15 items was obtained in which the factor loadings of the items were collected in a single dimension. The variance explained by this single factor regarding the scale was 51.62%. The K-M-O Sampling Adequacy Measure of the scale was 0.906; the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity value (2290.654), which is an indicator of whether there is a significant correlation between the items, was found to be statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ) and the collected data were found to be suitable for factor analysis. The factor loadings of the items in the final form of 15 items ranged between 0.38 and 0.76. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the university student pedagogical competence scale was calculated as 0.91.

## **Data Collection**

In order to be used in the research; permissions were obtained from the researchers who developed the scales. After obtaining the permissions, the informed consent forms were read to the individuals who would participate in the research and the signed informed consent form was received again. Repatriate university students were informed about the study in accordance with ethical principles. Important information such as confidentiality, their contribution to science, introduction of the scales and that they could leave the study at any time were conveyed to the participants. The names of the participants were not written on the scale forms. Data were collected between the months May and June 2024 via the scales and a survey form that was adapted and prepared by the researchers. The survey form consists of four sections. The first section includes questions about students' gender, year of study at the university, and current department. The second section includes questions about the students' adaptation to the university. The third section includes questions about the psychological adaptation of the repatriate students and the fourth section includes questions about their pedagogical competence. In the study, the adaptation of the repatriate students to the university was taken as the dependent variable and other factors affecting this situation as the independent variable.

## **Data Analysis**

Before the application, the repatriate university students were given the necessary preliminary information about the purpose of the study and how to answer the measurement tools used. SPSS 26.0 program was used in the analysis of the data. Firstly, normal distribution and regression analysis assumptions were examined before moving on to the analyses. According to the

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results, it was seen that the variables ( $p>.05$ ) showed a normal distribution (table). According to the Levene test, it was seen that the data belonging to the adaptation to university life, pedagogical competence and psychological adaptation scales of the repatriate university students had a homogeneous distribution (see Table 1). In this context, Pearson Correlation coefficient was used to determine the relationships between the adaptation to university life, pedagogical competence and psychological adaptation variables. T-test was used to determine whether the variables differed according to gender, F test was used for comparisons according to class level and Regression analysis was used to explain the relationships between the variables.

**Table 1**

*Normality and Homogeneity Test Analyses of the Scores of Repatriate University Students on the Adaptation to University Life, Pedagogical Competence and Psychological Adjustment Scales.*

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov			Levene's Test of Variances	
	Statistic	df	Sig.	F	Df
Social Adaptation	0,063	225	0,073	3,885	0,054
Academic Adaptation	0,055	225	0,104	3,065	0,079
Individual Adaptation	0,058	225	0,102	2,627	0,091
General Adaptation	0,059	225	0,101	3,512	0,073
Psychological Adaptation	0,061	225	0,093	2,624	0,089
Pedagogical Self-sufficiency	0,062	225	0,085	1,158	0,283

VIF and tolerance values (Collinearity) were calculated to determine whether there was a multicollinearity problem for the independent variables (Pedagogical competence and psychological adjustment) in the model created for multiple regression analyses. It was determined that the tolerance values were 0.951 and the VIF values were between 1-3 in the desired range (Becker et al., 2015), and it was determined that the independent variables did not have a multicollinearity problem (Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Collinearity and VIF Values Regarding the Independent Variables of Pedagogical Competence and Psychological Adjustment*

Eigenvalue	Condition Index	(Constant)	Variance Proportions			Collinearity Statistics	
			Psychological Adaptation	Pedagogical Self-sufficiency		Tolerance	VIF
				Condition	Self-sufficiency		
1	2,877	1,00	0,01	0,01	0,01		
2	0,082	5,93	0,02	0,38	0,82	0,951	1,051
3	0,042	8,32	0,97	0,61	0,17	0,951	1,051

Dependent Variable: Adjustment to University Life

## Findings

The first sub-problem of the study is formulated as: "What is the level of pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation, and adaptation to university life among repatriate university students?" To address this question, the mean scores and standard deviations of participants' responses on the relevant scales were analyzed (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

Descriptive Analysis of Repatriate Students' Adjustment to University Life, Psychological Adjustment and Pedagogical Competence Levels

Variables	N	Minimum	Maximum	$\bar{X}$	Sd
Social Adaptation	225	1,38	5,00	3,34	0,89
Academic Adaptation	225	1,14	4,71	3,24	0,88
Individual Adaptation	225	1,14	4,57	3,09	0,83
General Adaptation	225	1,55	4,36	3,22	0,73
Psychological Adaptation	225	1,00	5,00	3,38	1,06
Pedagogical Self-sufficiency	225	1,00	5,00	3,04	1,11

The table shows descriptive statistics regarding the scores obtained by repatriate university students from the scales of adaptation to university life, psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence. When the average scores are evaluated, it is seen that the item averages are generally between 3.00 and 3.40. This range is generally considered as medium level in 5-point Likert type

measurement tools. According to these findings, it is seen that the adaptation to university life, psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence of repatriate university students are at medium level.

The second sub-problem of the study is framed as: “*Is there a significant difference in pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation, and adaptation to university life based on the gender of repatriate university students?*” To answer this, participants’ scores on the scales were compared by gender using an independent samples *t*-test (see Tables 4, 5, and 6).

**Table 4**

*Comparison of Repatriate Students’ Adjustment to University Life by Gender*

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	T	P
Social Adaptation	Female	119	3,46	0,98	2,161	0,032
	Male	106	3,20	0,77		
Academic Adaptation	Female	119	3,36	0,94	2,167	0,031
	Male	106	3,10	0,79		
Individual Adaptation	Female	119	3,13	0,88	0,744	0,457
	Male	106	3,05	0,77		
General Adaptation	Female	119	3,32	0,80	2,018	0,045
	Male	106	3,12	0,64		

The research findings showed that the scores of the repatriate university students' adaptation to university life scale in the social adaptation dimension ( $t= 2.161$ ,  $p<.05$ ), academic adaptation dimension ( $t= 2.167$ ,  $p<.05$ ) and total adaptation ( $t= 2.018$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differed significantly regarding gender. According to the mean scores, it was seen that the repatriate female students had a higher level of adaptation to university life compared to their male peers.

**Table 5**

*Comparison of Psychological Adjustment of Repatriate University Students by Gender*

Variables	Gender6	N	Mean	Sd	T	P
Psychological Adaptation	Female	119	3,42	1,10	0,515	0,607
	Male	105	3,34	1,02		

The table shows the comparison results of the scores of the participating repatriate university students from the psychological adjustment scale according to gender. According to the analysis,

it was seen that the psychological adjustment scores of the repatriate university students ( $t= 0.515$ ,  $p>.05$ ) did not differ significantly according to the gender variable.

**Table 6***Comparison of Pedagogical Competencies of Repatriate University Students by Gender*

Variables	Gender	N	Mean	Sd	T	P
Pedagogical Self-sufficiency	Female	119	3,20	1,15	2,389	0,018
	Male	106	2,85	1,02		

The table shows the comparison results of the scores of the participating repatriate university students from the pedagogical competence scale according to gender. According to the analysis, it was seen that the pedagogical competence scores of the repatriate university students ( $t= 2.389$ ,  $p<.05$ ) differed significantly according to the gender variable. According to the mean scores, it was seen that the pedagogical competence of the repatriate female students was higher than their male peers.

The third sub-problem of the study is articulated as: *“Do pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation, and adaptation to university life among repatriate university students differ according to study year (freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors)?”* To resolve this, participants' scores were compared across class levels using an *F*-test (analysis of variance) (see Tables 7, 8, and 9).

**Table 7***Comparison of Repatriate Students' Adaptation to University Life According to Grade Level*

Variables	Class Level	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	F	p
Social Adaptation	1	46	3,05	0,88	8,665	0,000
	2	50	3,11	0,76		
	3	62	3,19	0,76		
	4	67	3,84	0,92		
Academic Adaptation	1	46	2,79	0,71	9,768	0,000
	2	50	3,04	0,72		
	3	62	3,08	0,72		
	4	67	3,84	0,92		

Individual Adaptation	1	46	2,88	0,78	7,200	0,000
	2	50	3,02	0,75		
	3	62	2,96	0,78		
	4	67	3,45	0,85		
General Adaptation	1	46	2,91	0,63	8,441	0,000
	2	50	3,05	0,60		
	3	62	3,07	0,61		
	4	67	3,71	0,78		

When Table 7 is examined, to determine whether there are differences between the scores of the Adjustment to University Life Scale according to different grade levels, the means of personal adjustment, social adjustment and academic adjustment scores were compared with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) for independent samples. Considering the analyses, significant differences were found according to grade level in all subscales and the scale as a whole ( $p<0.05$ ). According to Tukey test analyses, the levels of adjustment to university of repatriate students studying in the fourth-year students were found to be significantly higher than those of freshmen.

**Table 8**

*Comparison of Psychological Adjustment of Repatriate University Students According to Class Level*

Variables	Class Level	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	F	p
Psychological Adaptation	1	46	3,10	1,10	3,344	0,020
	2	50	3,31	1,06		
	3	62	3,31	1,01		
	4	67	3,70	1,01		

When Table 8 is examined, the mean scores of the scale were compared with the F test to determine whether there were differences between the scores of the Psychological Adjustment Scale according to different class levels. According to the analyses, significant differences were found in the psychological adjustment scale according to class level ( $p<0.05$ ). According to the Tukey test analyses, the psychological adjustment levels of repatriate students studying in the fourth class were found to be significantly higher than those of freshmen students.

**Table 9***Comparison of Pedagogical Competencies of Repatriate University Students by Class Level*

Variables	Class Level	N	$\bar{X}$	Sd	F	p
Pedagogical Self-sufficiency	1	46	2,64	1,22	5,413	0,001
	2	50	2,90	1,07		
	3	62	3,02	1,15		
	4	67	3,43	0,87		

When Table 9 is examined, the mean scores of the scale were compared with the F test to determine whether there were differences between the Pedagogical Competence Scale scores according to different class levels. According to the analyses, significant differences were found in the pedagogical adaptation scale according to class level ( $p<0.05$ ). According to the Tukey test analyses, the pedagogical competencies of the repatriate students studying in the fourth year were found to be significantly higher than the students in the first year.

The fourth sub-problem of the study is posed as: "*Is there a relationship between pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation, and adaptation to university life among repatriate university students?*" To investigate this, correlations between participants' scores on the scales were examined using correlation coefficients (see Table 10).

**Table 10***Correlation Analysis Results Showing Psychological Adjustment, Pedagogical Competence and Adjustment to University Life in Repatriate University Students*

Variables		Social Adaptation	Academic Adaptation	Individual Adaptation	General Adaptation	Psychological Adaptation	Pedagogical Self-sufficiency
Social Adaptation	-r-	1	,658**	,498**	,855**	,202**	,153*
	-p-		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,002	0,022
Academic Adaptation	-r-	,658**	1	,569**	,879**	,334**	,183**
	-p-	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,006
Individual Adaptation	-r-	,498**	,569**	1	,805**	,241**	,225**
	-p-	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,000	0,001
General Adaptation	-r-	,855**	,879**	,805**	1	,306**	,220**
	-p-	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000	0,001

Psychological Adaptation	-r-	,202**	,334**	,241**	,306**	1	,220**
	-p-	0,002	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,001
Pedagogical Self-sufficiency	-r-	,153*	,183**	,225**	,220**	,220**	1
	-p-	0,022	0,006	0,001	0,001	0,001	

P\*\*<0,01

When we look at the relationships between repatriate students' adaptation to university life and other variables, it was seen that social adaptation to university was positively and significantly correlated with psychological adjustment ( $r= .202$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and pedagogical efficacy ( $r= .153$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). It was also seen that there was a positively and significantly correlated between academic adjustment to university and psychological adjustment ( $r= .334$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and pedagogical efficacy ( $r= .183$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Besides, there was a positively and significantly correlated between personal adjustment to university life and psychological adjustment ( $r= .241$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and pedagogical efficacy ( $r= .225$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Finally, it was observed that there was a positive and highly significant relationship between the total scores of adaptation to university life - general adjustment and psychological adjustment ( $r= .306$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and pedagogical competence ( $r= .220$ ,  $p<0.05$ ).

The fifth sub-problem of the study is formulated as: "*Do pedagogical competence and psychological adaptation significantly predict adaptation to university life among participating repatriate students?*" To address this, a Multiple Regression Analysis was conducted on participants' scores (see Table 11).

**Table 11**

*Multiple Regression Analysis Results Regarding the Prediction of Psychological Adjustment and Pedagogical Competence on Adjustment to University Life in Repatriate University Students*

Variables	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients β	t	P
	B	Std. Error			
(Constant)	2,264	0,183		12,373	0,000
Psychological Adaptation	0,188	0,045	0,270	4,184	0,000
Pedagogical Self-sufficiency	0,106	0,043	0,160	2,476	0,014

a. Dependent Variable: General Adaptation

R=0.343; R<sup>2</sup>=0,118; F=14,82; p<0,05

When Table 11 is examined, it is seen that psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence are significant predictors of adaptation to university life ( $R: .343$ ,  $R^2 = .118$ ,  $F = 14.82$ ,  $p$ ). It can be stated that 11.8% of the total variance regarding adaptation to university life is explained by psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence. According to the  $\beta$  coefficients, both psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence affect the adaptation of repatriate students to university life at a very high and significant level.

### **Discussion, Conclusion and Implications**

The present study examines the levels of psychological adjustment, pedagogical competence, and adaptation to university life of repatriate university students. The main purpose of the study is to determine the predictive roles of psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence levels in the adaptation process of students to university life and to reveal the differences in these levels according to gender and grade level. The findings show that repatriate students generally exhibit moderate levels of psychological adjustment, pedagogical competence, and adaptation to university life. They are also resilient individuals, but targeted interventions may be needed to improve their adaptation experiences. The findings are consistent with resilience theories such as the stress and coping model of Lazarus and Folkman (1988), which emphasize how individuals regulate the effects of stress factors. However, the moderate results obtained may indicate deficiencies in institutional support or structural barriers in the education system, as well as unique challenges faced by repatriate students, such as cultural reintegration and academic expectations (Furnham, 2020). On the other hand, there are studies in the literature that argue that high levels of psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence are prerequisites for academic success (Bradley, 2000; Mori, 2000; Komiya & Eells, 2001; Nilsson et al., 2004). However, these research findings show that moderate adjustment is sufficient for functional integration, but may limit students from reaching the highest level in academic and social integration processes. These differences can be explained by cultural and contextual factors and reveal the need for educational strategies specifically designed for the needs of students returning from abroad.

The study investigated whether there is a significant difference between pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation and adaptation to university life regarding gender variable. It is found

that female students exhibited higher levels of social and academic adjustment and pedagogical competence than male students. This may reflect general socialization patterns that indicate that females tend to have stronger interpersonal skills and academic diligence. Gilligan (1993) supports these findings by suggesting that females' relational orientations provide them with an advantage in overcoming social complexities in academic contexts. Furthermore, studies conducted by Vera Gil (2004) emphasize that female students' organizational skills and participatory learning styles positively affect academic outcomes. Eisenberg et al. (2007) reported that male students generally outperformed females in stress tolerance and task-oriented coping mechanisms. The absence of gender differences in psychological adjustment in this study differs from such findings and suggests that cultural or institutional dynamics may equalize psychological resilience between genders.

The study also examined whether the study year variable make difference in pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation, and adaptation to university life among repatriate university students. The improvement in adjustment levels observed in upperclassmen suggests that prolonged exposure to university life promotes stronger integration. It is thought that students in their last years develop stronger coping mechanisms and social networks over time, which facilitates the adjustment process. This finding supports the developmental perspective on student adjustment proposed by Chickering and Reisser (1993) within the framework of the seven vectors of identity development. In comparison, the challenges faced by first-year students align with the critical importance of the initial transition period for long-term success (Tinto, 2012). The finding that upperclassmen exhibit significantly higher adjustment levels highlights the value of orientation programs and peer support systems in facilitating this transition. However, challenges such as academic pressure that persist throughout the academic years only highlight potential shortcomings that may limit prolonged exposure as an adjustment mechanism. Addressing such challenges may require institutional reforms to comprehensively support students (Tajibayeva et al., 2020).

Investigating the relationship between pedagogical competence, psychological adaptation, and adaptation to university life among repatriate university students was one of the main concern of the study. The findings reveal that the dimensions of social, academic and personal adaptation have positive and significant relationships with psychological adaptation and pedagogical

competence. The significant relationship between social adaptation and psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence indicates that students' social ties in the university environment have a positive effect on their mental health and academic competence perceptions. This situation is consistent with studies indicating that social ties contribute to psychological well-being by increasing the sense of belonging in university life (Tinto, 2012). In addition, the association of social adaptation with pedagogical competence reveals that students can increase their academic success through social support mechanisms. The significant relationship between academic adaptation and psychological adaptation and pedagogical competence shows that academic success is an important determinant in terms of psychological well-being and pedagogical development. As repatriate students achieve their academic goals in university life, it is seen that these successes support their perceptions of psychological empowerment and academic competence. This finding is in line with research emphasizing how academic motivation affects students' psychological adjustment processes (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002). Academic success can positively affect students' general adjustment processes by increasing their self-confidence.

The positive relationship between personal adjustment and psychological adjustment and pedagogical efficacy reveals that students' individual coping strategies play a critical role in their adaptation processes. In the process of repatriate students' adaptation to a new educational system and culture, their personal skills and strategies may have a positive effect on psychological resilience and pedagogical perceptions. In particular, it is stated that individual coping strategies increase academic performance and general quality of life (Schwarzer & Knoll, 2007). The positive relationships between general adjustment scores and psychological adjustment and pedagogical efficacy indicate that students' adaptation processes should be evaluated with a holistic approach. This finding indicates that there is a strong connection between psychological and pedagogical dimensions of general adjustment to university life. Holistic approaches that increase both emotional resilience and academic support should be developed to support students' adaptation processes (Guo et al., 2018). Such approaches can strengthen not only students' individual success but also their social ties.

The fact that psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence were found to be significant predictors of adjustment to university life suggests that these two factors play a central role in the adjustment process. It can be said that psychological adjustment facilitates students' emotional

health and social ties, while pedagogical competence supports their perceptions of academic success and performance. This situation is consistent with the literature emphasizing that individuals should be supported psychologically and pedagogically (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). These findings are also consistent with other studies in the literature. For example, in a study examining the adjustment processes of international students, it was stated that social support systems have a positive effect on psychological well-being (Sawir et al., 2008).

Similarly, another study indicating that academic adjustment is related to psychological and pedagogical support emphasized that emotional resilience and academic guidance services facilitate students' general adjustment processes (Zhou et al., 2008). In addition, the effect of individual adjustment strategies and pedagogical efficacy perception on academic success is also supported by other studies. In a study conducted on higher education students, the effect of personal coping strategies on adjustment processes was examined and it was stated that individual strategies support both psychological and academic adjustment (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This situation emphasizes the role played by repatriate students' personal skills in adjustment processes. Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory emphasizes the mutual effect of individual, environmental, and behavioral factors on learning and adjustment. However, some researchers suggest that these relationships depend on the context. Hofstede (2001) reveals in his study that cultural dimensions such as individualism and collectivism significantly shape these dynamics. Although this study found a strong link between the variables, the observed moderate levels may reflect cultural nuances specific to the Kazakhstani context and warrant further investigation in cross-cultural settings.

This study has several limitations. Self-reported measures increase the possibility of response bias, while the cross-sectional design of the study limits the determination of causal relationships among variables. In addition, the selection of the sample from a specific geographic and cultural context limits the generalizability of the findings. Future research is recommended to use longitudinal designs and diverse samples from different cultural contexts to address these limitations.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

It has been determined that psychological adaptation plays an important role in the adaptation of repatriate university students to university life. In this context, the moderate level of psychological

adaptation observed in the study reveals the necessity of interventions aimed at improving students' emotional resilience and coping strategies. Universities can implement mental health programs such as counseling services and stress management workshops to meet the specific needs of repatriate students. It is recommended that such programs be designed to increase social connectedness and integration, especially considering that the sense of belonging is an important predictor of psychological well-being.

The moderate level of pedagogical competence indicates that additional resources should be provided to support students' academic skills. Making tools such as academic support workshops, peer education, and learning support centers accessible can make it easier for repatriate students to meet academic expectations. In addition, integrating pedagogical training modules into orientation programs for these students can increase the contribution to academic success during the adaptation process. Increasing faculty members' awareness of the challenges faced by this group of students is also important in creating a supportive learning environment.

The gender differences observed in the study suggest that differentiated support mechanisms should be developed for the needs of male and female students. Leadership development programs aimed at utilizing strengths related to social and academic adaptation can be recommended for female students, while workshops can be planned for male students to develop stress management and task-oriented coping skills. Such interventions can reduce psychological and academic performance differences between genders.

The higher levels of adjustment among upper-class students indicate the importance of supportive programs for freshmen. Universities can encourage mentoring initiatives where sophomores, juniors and seniors guide first-year students and offer structured orientation programs that focus on academic, social, and personal challenges. Such programs can make it easier for freshmen to cope with the difficulties of the transition process. Creating an inclusive and supportive university environment for repatriate students can increase the social integration of these students. Platforms that encourage cultural exchange and dialogue environments can reduce students' sense of isolation. In addition, it is important to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of support services based on student feedback and make necessary adjustments. In this context, psychological adjustment and pedagogical competence stand out as important determinants in the adjustment of

repatriate university students to university life. By developing interventions for the identified deficiencies and utilizing the insights obtained in this study, educational institutions can create inclusive and structured learning environments that support the academic and personal success of this student group.

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